

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SANA 04033 142157Z
ACTION SS-25

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O R 141930Z OCT 77
FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 2637
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
SECDEF WASHDC
DIA WASH DC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
COMIDEASTFOR

S E C R E T SANA 4033

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, YE
SUBJECT: INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT

REF: SANA 4032

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT GHASHMI STATES THAT YAR INTERNAL
SITUATION IS UNDER CONTROL AND HOPES TO BE ABLE TO GIVE
AMBASSADOR MORE DETAILS ON ASSASSINATIONS WITHIN TWO DAYS.
END SUMMARY.

2. AMBASSADOR AND DATT SAW PRESIDENT GHASHMI FOR 20-MINUTE
INTERVIEW AT LATTER'S OLD OFFICE IN YAR MILITARY HEADQUARTERS
ON EVENING OF OCTOBER 14. MEETING WAS ARRANGED WITH
NO PRIOR APPOINTMENT AT AMBASSADO'S REQUEST. THOUGH OB-
VIOUSLY TIRED AND SUFFERING FROM BAD BACK, GHASHMI WAS
RELAXED AND OPEN.

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3. AMBASSADOR BEGAN BY SAYING THAT AS REPRESENTATIVE
OF FRIENDLY GOVERNMENT TO YEMEN HE FELT CONSTRAINED
TO CONSULT WITH GHASHMI DURING CRITICAL PERIOD THROUGH
WHICH COUNTRY IS PASSING. HE STATED FRINDLY THAT, AS
PRESIDENT IS UNDOUBTEDLY AWARE, SANA IS FULL OF RUMORS,
INCLUDING SOME HIGHLY ACCUSATORY ONES AGAINST

GHASHMI HIMSELF. AMBASSADOR EMPHASIZED THAT THIS IS POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE SITUATION AND URGED GHASHMI TO ANNOUNCE TO THE YEMENI PEOPLE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ALL AVAILABLE DETAILS ON THE MURDER OF PRESIDENT HAMD AND HIS BROTHER TO QUIET THE INCREASING TENSIONS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, ESTABLISH THE GOVERNMENT'S CREDIBILITY AND UNDER CUT EFFORTS OF ELEMENTS WISHING TO UNDERMINE YEMEN'S STABILITY.

4. GHASHMI EXPLAINED THAT THE MAIN PROBLEM TO DATE HAS BEEN LACK OF SUFFICIENT AND ACCURATE INFORMATION TO MAKE SUCH A STATEMENT. HE ASSURED THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE INTERNAL SITUATION IS FULLY UNDER CONTROL. ATTRIBUTING RUMORS TO TRADITIONAL YEMENI RUMOR-MONGERING, PARTY FACTIONALISTS, AND SOVIETS, HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE ARMY IS UNIFIED. REPORTS OF WIDESPREAD ARRESTS, HE SAID, ARE ABSOLUTELY FALSE AND RESULT IN GREAT PART FROM FABRICATIONS BY RADIO IRAQ, WHICH HAS SUBSEQUENTLY RETRACTED THEM. HE ADDED THAT SEVERAL KEY OFFICERS FLED AT THE TIME OF THE ASSASSINATIONS, THINKING THAT A FULL-SCALE COUP WAS TAKING PLACE, BUT MOST OF THEM HAVE RETURNED. AMONG THESE ARE LT. COL. MANSUR ABD AL-JALIL, CHIEF OF MILITARY POLICE. GHASHMI DENIED REPORTS THAT 7TH BRIGADE COMMANDER MAJOR ALI QANAF ZAHRA IS DEAD. MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, HE SAID, HIS COLLEAGUE ON THE COMMAND COUNCIL MAJOR ABDULLAH ABD AL-SECRET

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ALIM IS FULLY SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT.

5. THE ROUTINE BUSINESS OF THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT IS PROCEEDING NORMALLY, ACCORDING TO GHASHMI. HE HAS APPOINTED A NEW COMMANDER FOR THE AMALIQA DIVISION TO REPLACE THE SLAIN LT. COL. ABDULLAH AL-HAMDI; ALSO A NEW DEPUTY COMMANDER FOR THIS POSITION. HE EXPECTS TO ISSUE A DECREE SHORTLY APPOINTING DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF LT. COLONEL ALI SHAYBA TO THE NOW VACATED POSITION OF CHIEF OF STAFF. HE ASKED THE US DEFENSE ATTACHE TO CONTINUE WORKING WITH SHAYBA ON ROUTINE MATTERS OF TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT.

6. RETURNING TO THE ASSASSINATIONS, GHASHMI SAID THAT THE NEWLY-FORMED COMMITTEE IS PURSUING ITS INVESTIGATIONS AND HAS BEGUN TO TURN UP EVIDENCE. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED IF GHASHMI HAD ANY DETAILS TO PASS TO HIM, AND THE PRESIDENT SMILINGLY RESPONDED, "NOT YET," BUT ADDED THAT HE HOPES TO HAVE SOMETHING WITHIN THE NEXT TWO DAYS.

7. IN DISCUSSING INTERNAL SITUATION, GHASHMI EXPRESSED NO CONCERN THAT SHAYKH ABDULLAH AL-AHMAR WOULD THREATEN THE REGIME AT THIS TIME, ALTHOUGH SINAN ABU LUHUM IS ALWAYS WAITING IN THE WINGS TO FOMENT TROUBLE. IN RESPONSE TO THE AMBASSADOR'S QUESTION, HE SAID THAT NO AGREEMENT HAD BEEN NEGOTIATED WITH AL-AHMAR BEFORE HAMDI'S DEATH, BUT THAT CONTACTS ARE CONTINUING WITH SAUDI ASSISTANCE. HE NOTED THAT PRINCE TURKI IS DUE IN YEMEN ON SATURDAY 15 OCTOBER.

8. IN CONCLUSION, GHASHMI ASSURED THE AMBASSADOR THAT NOT ONLY WOULD PREVIOUS WARM RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES CONTINUE BUT THAT HE HOPED THESE RELATIONS WOULD
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BECOME INCREASINGLY CLOSE UNDER THE NEW REGIME. HE SMILINGLY SUGGESTED THAT THE AMBASSADOR SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON OUR LONG-TERM MUTUAL POLITICAL INTERESTS AND HE HIMSELF WOULD TAKE CARE OF INTERNAL SECURITY AND THE YEMEN ARMED FORCES.

9. AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT: PRESIDENT GHASHMI APPEARED COMPLETELY IN COMMAND OF HIMSELF AND CONFIDENT IN HIS COMMAND OF INTERNAL SITUATION, AT LEAST IN SANA. THERE WAS NO HINT OF HESITATION OR EQUIVOCATION. I MUST NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT HIS STORIES ARE BEING CHALLENGED FROM SEVERAL SIDES. DESPITE GHASHMI'S DISCLAIMERS, MY COLLEAGUES AND I ARE STILL CONCERNED THAT POSSIBILITY EXISTS OF FURTHER PURGES WITH RESULTANT DANGER OF ARMED CONFLICT.
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